

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8610
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 4603

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PGOV, GH
SUBJ: ACHEAMPONG STRUGGLING TO RETAIN POWER

REF: (A) ACCRA 4524 (B) ACCRA 4595

1. SUMMARY: ACHEAMPONG'S DRASIC RESHUFFLING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA REFLECTS HIS AWARENESS OF THE GOG'S INCREASING UNPOPULARITY AND IS A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO RETAIN POWER. DEMONSTRATIONS AND GENERAL UNREST ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE, HOWEVER, AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE HE CAN REMAIN IN POWER MUCH LONGER WITHOUT RESORTING TO REPRESSIVE MEASURES. END SUMMARY.

2. REFTELS REPORTED SWEEPING JUNE 14 RESHUFFLE OF
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GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT BY HEAD OF STATE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) ACHEAMPONG AND THE IMMEDIATE AND LARGEY NEGATIVE REACTIONS TO THAT ACTION ON THE PART OF STUDENTS, DOCTORS AND OTHERS. ALTHOUGH THE DUST HAS NOT YET SETTLED AND IT IS STILL FAR TOO SOON TO MAKE ANY DEFINITIVE JUDGMENT, WE CAN OFFER SOME PRELIMINARY AND HIGHLY TENTATIVE

COMMENTS ON THE REASONS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT
SOME WAGS ARE ALREADY CALLING "THE TUESDAY NIGHT
MASSACRE."

3. FIRST OF ALL, ACHEAMPONG'S DRASTIC SHAKEUP
OF THE GOG REFLECTS HIS SOMEWHAT BELATED APPRECIATION
OF THE FACT THAT HE AND HIS INCREASINGLY UNPOPULAR
GOVERNMENT ARE IN DEEP TROUBLE. ALMOST CERTAINLY,
IT IS AN ATTEMPT TO BUY TIME AND, BY SINGLING OUT
SOME SCAPEGOATS FOR SACKING, TO SATISFY THE
GHANAIAN PUBLIC'S DEMANDS FOR DRAMATIC ACTION TO
CORRECT GHANA'S ILLS. ACHEAMPONG SIMULTANEOUSLY
SELECTED HIS TARGETS FOR THE AXE WITH A VIEW TOWARD
SOLIDIFYING HIS OWN POSITION AND ELIMINATING
POTENTIAL RIVALS--A TECHNIQUE HE HAS USED WITH GREAT
EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PAST. HENCE, THE REMOVAL OF
THREE OF THE MOST ABLE AND POPULAR SENIOR MILITARY
OFFICERS: RADM DZANG, MAJ GEN HAMIDU AND BRIG
NUNOO MENSAH.

4. DZANG AND HAMIDU, BOTH NORTHERNERS, ARE PROBABLY
SUSPECTED BY ACHEAMPONG OF HAVING BEEN ASSOCIATED
WITH RECENTLY-ARRESTED COL. MINYILA AND/OR OTHER
NORTHERN COUP PLOTS. CHIEF OF STAFF BRIG NUNOO MENSAH
IS NOT A NORTHERNER, BUT IS REPORTEDLY ACCUSED OF
OPENLY CRITICIZING THE SMC GOVERNMENT. ALL THREE
OFFICERS ARE EFFECTIVE AND POPULAR IN THE ARMED
FORCES. THEIR REMOVAL IS LIKELY TO CAUSE FURTHER
RESENTMENT IN OFFICER CORPS. PREVIOUSLY ACHEAMPONG
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HAS BEEN ABLE TO ISOLATE HIGH RANKING OFFICERS WITH
CHARGES OF CORRUPTION OR INSUBORDINATION (E.G.,
OKAI, BEAUSOLIEL) BEFORE REMOVING THEM, BUT HE HAS
NOT DONE SO IN THIS CASE.

5. THE REMOVAL OF LT COL KUTIN (COMMISSIONER OF
TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS), LT COL JACKSON (LOCAL
GOVERNMENT) AND COL NKEGBE (HEALTH) AND THEIR REPLACE-
MENT BY CIVILIANS NOT ONLY ELIMINATED THREE
NOTORIOUSLY CORRUPT AND INEFFICIENT COMMISSIONERS
BUT PERMITTED THE INFUSION OF MORE CIVILIANS--A WELCOME
ACTION LONG OVERDUE IN THE EYES OF MOST GHANAIANS.
THE REMOVAL OF THE RESPECTED CHIEF JUSTICE AZU CRABBE
IS PROBABLY RELATED TO HIS INABILITY (ALONG WITH
THE ASANTEHENYE) TO GET THE STUDENTS OFF ACHEAMPONG'S
BACK IN THEIR RECENT AND ILL FATED MEDIATION ATTEMPT
AND, MORE SERIOUS IN ACHEAMPONG'S EYES, HIS MENTION
IN A RECENT STUDENT MANIFESTO AS A CANDIDATE TO HEAD
AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AFTER ACHEAMPONG WAS REMOVED.

6. PARTICULARLY DISTURBING IS THE REMOVAL OF THE
VERY ABLE AMON NIKOI AS GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF GHANA.
IN HIS EFFORTS TO CONTROL FOREIGN EXCHANGE EXPENDITURES
AND SET MORE SENSIBLE ECONOMIC PRIORITIES, NIKOI HAS
HAD SEVERAL RECENT CONFRONTATIONS WITH ACHEAMPONG.
WE ASSUME THAT THE CHAIRMAN HAS GROWN WEARY OF THESE
ARGUMENTS WITH NIKOI AND DESIRES A MORE PLIANT
HAND AT THE BANK. GHANA THUS LOSES ONE OF ITS
BRIGHTEST AND MOST DEDICATED CIVIL SERVANTS. (NIKOI
WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY WHEN THE AXE FELL.)

7. JOE APPIAH'S ASSIGNMENT TO THE UN PROBABLY
REFLECTS (A) APPIAH'S FAILURE IN HIS ASSIGNED TASK
TO DRUM UP WIDESPREAD PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR UNION GOVERN-
MENT: AND (B) THE FACT THAT THE MILITARY HAS NEVER
LIKED NOR TRUSTED APPIAH AND RESENTED HIS STATUS AS
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CONFIDANT TO ACHEAMPONG. THE CHAIRMAN ALSO
RECOGNIZED THAT APPIAH FANCIED HIMSELF AS A
FUTURE PRIME MINISTER AND THUS WAS ALSO A POTENTIAL
RIVAL. IN NEW YORK, ALTHOUGH GHANA'S IMAGE AT THE
UN MAY SUFFER, APPIAH WILL BE SAFELY REMOVED FROM THE
DOMESTIC SCENE.

8. APPOINTMENTS OF THE RESPECTED ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE
COAST AMISSAH AND TRADE UNION CONGRESS (TUC) SEC GEN
ISSIFU (LATTER IS STILL IN GENEVA AT ILO CONFERENCE)
WERE ALMOST CERTAINLY MADE--AS WERE THE OTHERS--
UNILATERALLY BY ACHEAMPONG WITHOUT CONSULTATIONS

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MF ANY KIND WITH THE TWO MEN. TUC OFFICIALS WERE STUNNED AT THE NEWS, AND GHANIAN CONTACTS ARE ALREADY GRUMBLING ABOUT THE TWO MEN'S BEING "USED" BY THE HEAD OF STATE IN THIS WAY. BOTH MEN ARE RESPECTED HERE AS INDEPENDENT AND TOUGH-MINDED (AMISSAH CLASHED WITH NKRUMAH ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION), AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THEY WILL REALLY COOPERATE IN ACHEAMPONG'S ATTEMPT TO BURNISH HIS DOMESTIC IMAGE. AT THE MOMENT, WE ARE INCLINED TO DOUBT IT.

9. STRANGELY ENOUGH, IN THE LIGHT OF THE HIGHER-LEVEL SHIFTS INVOLVED, PERHAPS THE MOST DANGEROUS--NOT TO SAY STUPID--ACTION BY ACHEAMPONG WAS HIS FIRING OF DR. DODU, THE HEAD OF GHANA'S MEDICAL SCHOOL, AND DR. BADDOE, A SURGEON AT KORLE BU TEACHING HOSPITAL. THIS PETULANT ACT, REFLECTING THE CHAIRMAN'S ANGER AT THE RECENT (AND CONTINUING) STRIKE OF THE DOCTORS,

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HAS GIVEN THE STUDENTS A NEW CAUSE AROUND WHICH THEY ARE RALLYING AND IS DEEPLY RESENTED BY MANY OF OUR GHANAIAN CONTACTS.

10. IT APPEARS EVIDENT THAT THE SUBSTANTIAL INFUSION OF CIVILIAN BLOOD INTO A PREVIOUSLY ALMOST ENTIRELY MILITARY CABINET WAS INTENDED BY ACHEAMPONG TO APPEASE PUBLIC IMPATIENCE WITH MILITARY LEADERSHIP AND POSSIBLY EVEN TO GIVE A FORETASTE OF WHAT HE MEANS BY UNION GOVERNMENT. FIRST EDITORIAL REACTION IN GHANIAN TIMES, WHOSE EDITOR KWAME GYAWU-KYEM IS KNOWN TO BE VERY CLOSE PERSONALLY TO ACHEAMPONG, CONCENTRATED WHOLLY ON THIS ASPECT. PAPER OBSERVED THAT THE MOVE BRINGS REPRESENTATIVES OF LABOR AND CHURCH AS WELL AS DISTINGUISHED ECONOMISTS AND A TRADITIONAL CHIEF INTO TOP LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT AND GIVES THEM A CHANCE "TO PROVE THEIR METTLE."

11. THE QUESTION REMAINS: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?
THESE CHANGES AND NEW APPOINTMENTS ARE LARGELY
COSMETIC AND DO NOT BEGIN TO ATTACK GHANA'S
FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS. (INDEED, THE REMOVAL OF AN
INTERNATIONALLY-KNOWN FIGURE SUCH AS DR. NIKOI FROM
THE BANK WILL DELAY FURTHER ANY HOPE OF ECONOMIC
REFORMS AND RECOVERY.) WHILE MANY WILL REGARD THE
APPOINTMENT OF MORE CIVILIAN COMMISSIONERS AS A STEP
IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, THE LEVEL OF DISAFFECTION
IS NOW SUCH--PARTICULARLY AMONG THE STUDENTS--THAT
ONLY THE REMOVAL OF ACHEAMPONG HIMSELF IS LIKELY TO TURN OFF
THE RISING TIDE OF DISCONTENT. ACHEAMPONG'S SUDDEN RESHUFFLE
REFLECTED HIS GROWING DESPERATION AND A LAST DITCH ATTEMPT TO
RETAIN POWER. IT MAY HAVE BOUGHT HIM SOME TIME--BUT
NOT, WE THINK, VERY MUCH. THE STUDENTS ARE SPOILING
FOR A CONFRONTATION AND ARE DETERMINED TO TOPPLE
ACHEAMPONG. WE THEREFORE CONTINUE TO FIND IT
DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE CHAIRMAN CAN CONTINUE
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MUCH LONGER IN OFFICE UNLESS HE RESORTS TO
REPRESSIVE AND DESPOTIC METHODS. SMITH

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